

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, April 13, 2016, to receive a Review of Theatre Operations.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Caitlin McGrath, Executive Director of Greenbelt Theatre; Mary Moien, Greenbelt News Review; Bill Orleans and others.

Dr. McGrath reviewed the 2015 annual report for Greenbelt Theatre. She said over 140 films, including 50 first-run films, have been shown since the Theatre's opening in May 2015. Dr. McGrath said she (and staff) strive to make the Theatre "first class" and provide for a wonderful experience for patrons.

Dr. McGrath said the Theatre has successfully partnered with over 25 community organizations for special events and brought in films outside of the regularly scheduled nightly films. These community organizations include the Greenbelt Community Foundation, Prince George's County Historical Society, The National Trust, Greenbelt American Legion, Greenbelt Cooperative Alliance, Roosevelt Center Merchants' Association, International Deaf Partnerships, Greenbelt Swim Team and many others.

In response to a question from Ms. Davis, Dr. McGrath explained that she strives to accommodate all requests for use of the Theatre for community events. However, she advised it often becomes difficult due to: 1) contractual commitments of the Theatre to show movies on a regular schedule; and 2) actual costs for Theatre usage and staffing are often not covered by the event. She mentioned that she is looking to secure grants to cover Theatre costs for hosting community events.

In response to a question from Mayor Jordan, Dr. McGrath said the first member satisfaction survey was conducted about a month ago. She said the survey indicated most members were very pleased with their membership. Dr. McGrath said some feedback was received about programming.

There was discussion regarding marketing for the Theatre. Dr. McGrath said one of the next steps was to capture and review the demographics of the current patrons and identify underserved populations. Once identified, she said marketing would be increased towards these populations.

Ms. Mach asked whether students from the University of Maryland (UM) regularly attend the Theatre. Dr. McGrath said patrons include UM faculty and graduate students but not many undergraduate students. She said a lot of marketing had been done at UM, but noted that a lot of undergraduate students tend to stay close to campus.

Dr. McGrath said a new trend for theaters is to provide food with the movies. She said she was working with the City on scheduling a pajama party night, perhaps on a Sunday evening when school was not in session the following day, and providing food as well as a movie. Ms. Mach suggested offering a dinner linked to the theme of the movie being shown could be considered for an event also.

Mayor Jordan asked about the HVAC system in the Theatre. Dr. McGrath said the system was very inefficient and it was difficult to keep the facility warm in the winter. She said grant money will be sought for HVAC and Green Roof repairs.

Dr. McGrath reported on the planned Phase Two Renovations which include new seats, new screen, variable masking, acoustic paneling and a speaker's podium. She said a capital campaign will be launched and grants will be sought for these renovations.

Mayor Jordan requested the Theatre annual budget be shared with Council.

There was discussion regarding securing sponsorships for snow day programming, summer film series, etc. Dr. McGrath said she was actively working on sponsorships. She advised that a \$200 sponsorship provides the name of the sponsor on the marque, free tickets for the sponsor, an information table, etc. She said on screen advertising for one year costs \$1,750. Dr. McGrath said both sponsorships and advertising commitments have been difficult to secure.

Informational Items

Ms. Mach reported on concerns discussed at the Boxwood Civic Association meeting last night, including foreclosed property, speeding vehicles on Lastner Lane, and ground depressions where the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission had recently done work.

Ms. Davis reported on a problem with the walls of 7726 Hanover Parkway that had been discussed at the Greenbriar Phase I and Phase II Association meeting last night.

Ms. Davis provided a Maryland Municipal League Legislative Committee update on the 2016 Legislative Session.

The meeting ended at 10:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*